

A day in the life of a monk

Self-led tour at Fountains
Abbey & Studley Royal



Notes for teachers

2

Please contact the estate office on **01765 643160** / **fountainsabbey@nationaltrust.org.uk** to pre-book your visit. You'll also be able to arrange a pre-visit to familiarise yourself with the estate and prepare your risk assessment.

Prop bags for this self-led tour are available to borrow (although not essential). Please let us know if this is something you require.

Subject to availability we may be able to provide robes for teachers and students to wear during the visit (a hire cost will be applied to cover laundry).

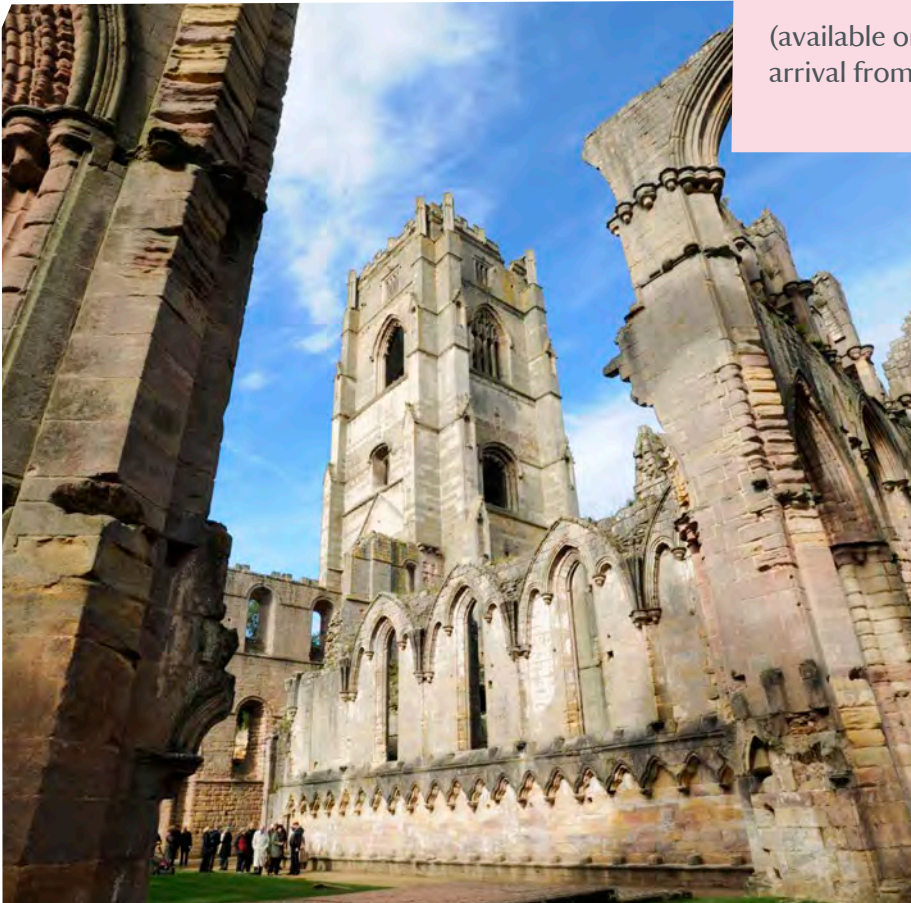
For this self-led tour we recommend you provide one adult to 15 children (splitting a class into groups of 10–15 children). It's aimed at Key Stage 2.

We anticipate this tour will take you around 1.5–2 hours to complete and you'll have all the information you need in this pack.

Toilets are marked on the welcome leaflet map. There are benches at the visitor centre and in the field opposite the play area that you are welcome to use for lunch break areas.

Please use the welcome leaflet map to guide you around the abbey

(available on the website or on arrival from the Welcome Team)



Swanley Grange

As an introduction to the tour pose the following questions to the children:

Q What is an abbey?

A An abbey is a place where monks live.

Q What are monks?

A Monks are men who have decided to devote themselves to a life of service to God. At Fountains Abbey the monks belonged to the Cistercian Order (the Cistercians were also known as White Monks. They spent their lives in isolation and poverty).

Q Why did they become monks?

A They became monks because they were called by God and wanted to serve him.

Q Why was the abbey important?

A Religious orders such as the one at Fountains Abbey were seen as important to the rest of society. Life in general at that time was very hard, famine, war, disease. People knew there would be no reward in this life but they could hope that in heaven it would be better. The monks didn't just pray for themselves, they prayed for everyone, which gave people hope.

Say that at the end of the tour children will be asked if, after what they have learnt today, they would have liked to be a monk.

Activity – Rules

Before asking the children to form two lines in order to process to the Abbey, mention rules. Ask them what rules they have at school, and why they are important. Then introduce the Rules of St Benedict that the monks followed, particularly poverty, chastity and obedience. These rules were written by St Benedict to show how the monks could live together in harmony. Obedience includes asking permission to speak. So now ask the children to process down to the Abbey in silence, and in their lines.



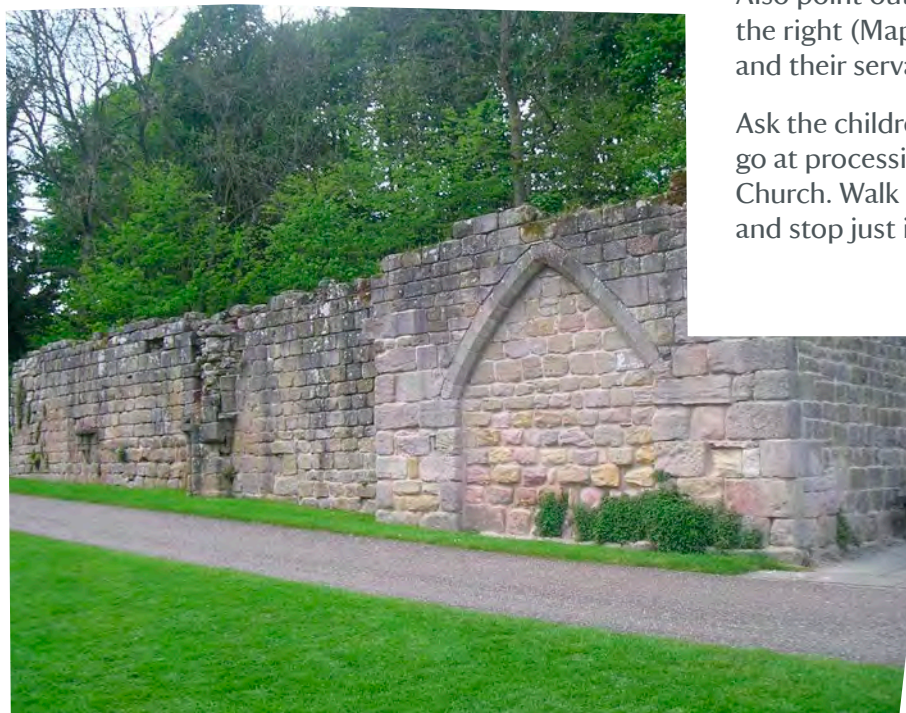
Porter's Lodge

On arrival at Porter's Lodge, ask them what was different about being silent, how difficult it was, what they noticed. Mention respecting others' space and not distracting others. How did they feel?

Tell them that they are now in the precinct of the Abbey which would have been quite a busy place.

This is where visitors to the abbey arrived, monks gave out food to the poor, dispensed medicines and ointments, and clothed the poor.

This is also where men who wanted to join the abbey as novice monks would arrive. They would be asked three questions before being allowed in. Are you male? Are you at least 16? Can you read and write Latin? Then they would meet some other monks and, if they and the Abbot agreed, they would be admitted to the Abbey on the 7th day. They then had to train for a year to learn how to be a monk, including learning all the church services in Latin, as well as all of the psalms. There were two sets of monks who lived here, those who were educated and became Choir Monks (and were known as the white monks because of their white robes, made from sheepswool), and the other group called Lay Brothers who did more manual work, on the farms, in the Brewhouse etc. They wore brown robes.



West Green

Move to the West Green, the large green space in front of the Abbey, and tell the children how the first monks arrived. In 1132 (stress nearly 900 years ago) 13 monks came from St Marys Abbey in York to set up a new Abbey. They had been given the land by the Archbishop of York, but there was nothing here at the beginning. Ask the children if they can imagine what that would have looked like.

Ask why this was a good place to have an abbey. Ask children to have a good look around them and come up with what would be useful to the monks in building the Abbey. Develop their ideas.

The river provided water for washing, drinking and cooking, and later drove a mill for grinding wheat into flour. There were lots of trees for building the first wooden church and the other early buildings. There were cliffs of stone for building the abbey, which used to come right across the West Green. And importantly it was a quiet secluded valley, away from the hubbub of the town. Ask them to look at what they can see, the Abbey Church in front and to the left and the long low building of the Cellarium running to the right, the first floor of which was the lay brothers dormitory. Also point out the remains of the Guest Houses on the right (Map Ref 8), which accommodated guests and their servants, horses etc.

Ask the children if they would like to have another go at processing in silence as you go into the Abbey Church. Walk towards the entrance of the church and stop just inside.

Abbey Church

**Ask how successful this silent procession was.
Was it easier to do this time?**

At this point ask them to have a good look around and tell you what they see. What is missing? What would it have looked like in 1250 when the monks were living here?

Windows – would have been made of plain glass and it would have not been totally clear, but probably have a grey or green tinge depending on the silica/sand used to make it.

Roof – would have been made of wood and then covered in lead to keep it waterproof. This was melted down at the dissolution and was worth nearly as much as gold at that time.

Walls – would have been plastered and whitewashed. The Cistercians kept the interior of the church very simple so as not to distract the monks from their prayers. Still evidence of plaster and whitewash.

There would have been wooden furniture and screens, seats etc. dividing the church up. The monks would not have had the same view as we do today.

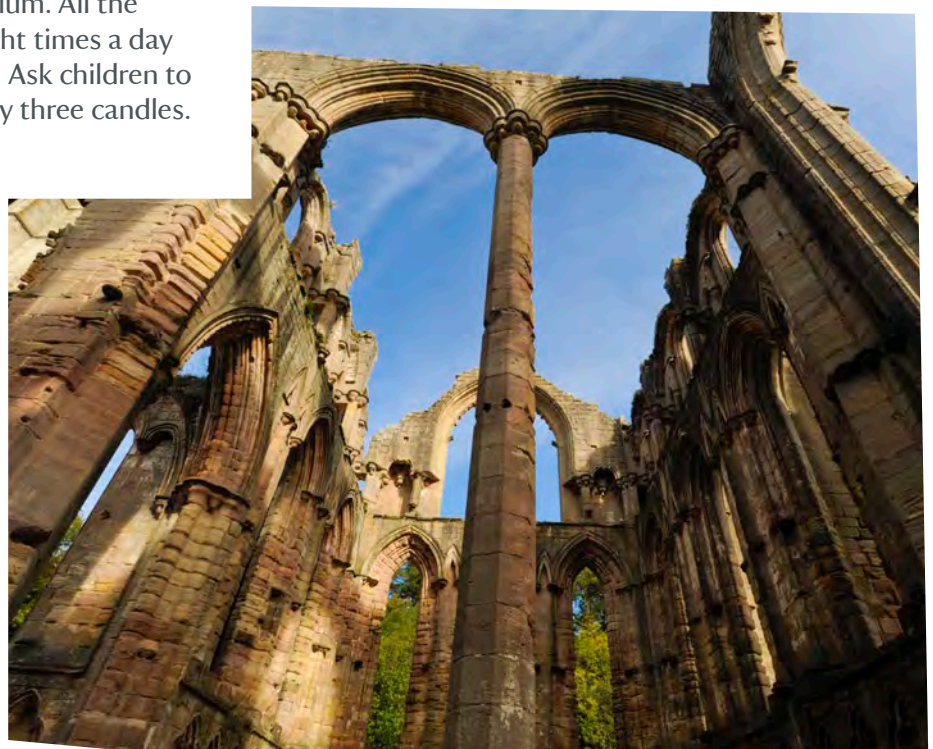
Point out the staircase to the right hand side and explain that this is the lay brothers night stairs. They slept in the dormitory above the Cellarium. All the monks would come into the church eight times a day for services, the first one being at 2am. Ask children to imagine the church at night lit with only three candles.

Activity – Church

Walk down the right aisle to the crossing, passing the door to the Cloister on your right, and point out the tower to the left. This was the last part of the Abbey Church to be built (by Abbot Huby).

Now move to the altar and bow, making the sign of the cross (some groups may not wish to participate in this activity). At this point you could challenge the children to raise their arms in praise of God for two minutes, (ask how that was?) and/or sing a school song. Or try out some Latin – ‘Et laudavit dominus’ – Lord be praised, ‘Christus laudatur’ – Christ be praised, – ‘Et laudavit dominus’ – Lord be praised. All the services were in Latin.

From here go back to the door to the Cloister.



Cloister

Walk a little way into the Cloister, if dry step on to the grass. Ask children to look around. Explain that this is the heart of the Abbey, and all the important rooms lead off it. As you came out of the church you will have noticed a rectangular recess in the wall on the left. This would have held a wax tablet which had the duties for the day allotted to the monks, e.g. serving in the refectory, reading the chapter from the Rule of St Benedict during meals etc. Notice square holes in walls which would have been used for the supports for the roof that covered the walkway. The monks walked around the cloister with their hoods up, in prayer or meditation. They all walked in the same direction so as not to bump into each other.

On the south facing wall, where the light was best, the monks stood at desks to do their work, copying religious texts and books.

Activity – Document Copying

If using the prop bag, take out the feathers (quills), the sheet of what feels like thick paper (vellum, made from sheep skin. Mention here that the Abbey kept thousands of sheep on its farms) and examples of their script, and pass around to children. Ask them what they think the feathers and the sheet were for, and why the monks had to copy documents by hand. Mention that paper hadn't arrived in England at that time, and the much later invention of the printing press. So copying documents by hand was the only way that provided extra copies.



Chapter House

Take children into the Chapter House, the second archway opening on the left. They can sit down on the stone plinths on the left. This is where the Abbot and the monks met each day, to read a chapter of the Rule of St Benedict, to remember that day's saint, to remember their brothers who had died, and to say prayers for their patrons, the sick etc. Also this was where they would confess their sins, and be given their punishment. Remind children why it was important to confess sins. The belief was that in order to reach Heaven you should have confessed your sins. And as the monks were praying for everyone it was very important that they were without sin.

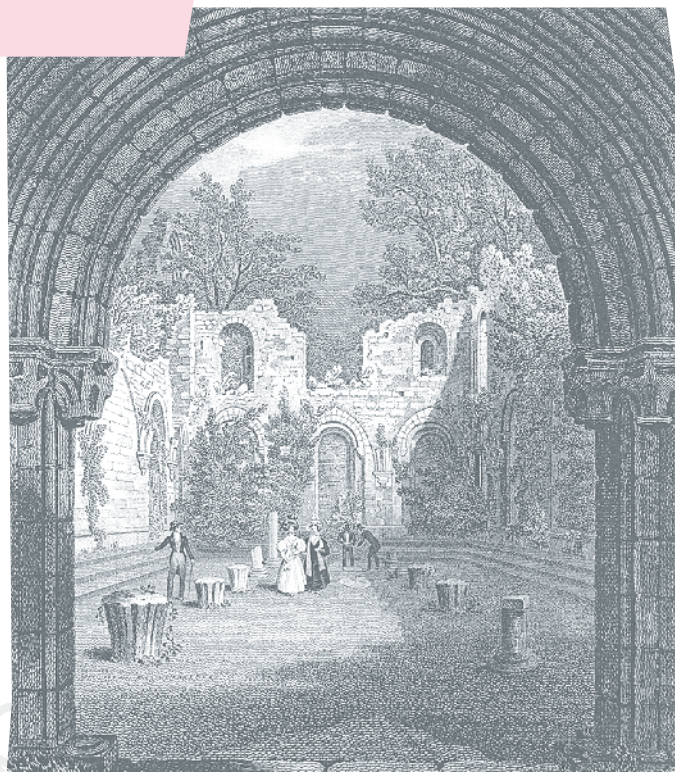
Activity – Confessions and Accusations

Take out the confession and accusation cards, ask children to volunteer to role play. Be prepared for some very severe punishments to be handed out!

Activity – Dissolution

Tell the children that they are sitting in the very room that King Henry VIII's men arrived in 1536 to tell the Abbot that the abbey was being closed, and three years later came back to close it. The dissolution role play is a great way of getting the information across, if you have time to do it here. But it could also be done in the Cellarium later.

Mention the graves visible in the room, most of which were for previous abbots. There are still visible masons' marks (Ws and Zs) on the wall to the left as you enter the Chapter House. Can the children spot them, being careful not to fall into the graves.



Warming Room

Coming out of the Chapter House, turn left and go into the room straight ahead, to the right of the staircase. Nine times out of ten the children will head for the fireplace and climb inside. Warn them ahead of time that pigeons nest in it and may well fly out unexpectedly. Ask them if they can find the second fireplace (to the left of the open fireplace, and has been filled in). Tell them that this was the only fire lit in the Abbey, and only between November and March. If the monks got very cold they had to ask permission to come in for a warm, but only for 20 minutes at a time. This was also where the monks had their baths. (Ask children how many times a year they thought – four times a year!). Explain that they shared the same bathwater, the senior monk going first, then a middle ranking monk and then the poor novice monk. (The water must have been pretty cold and dirty by the time it got to him).

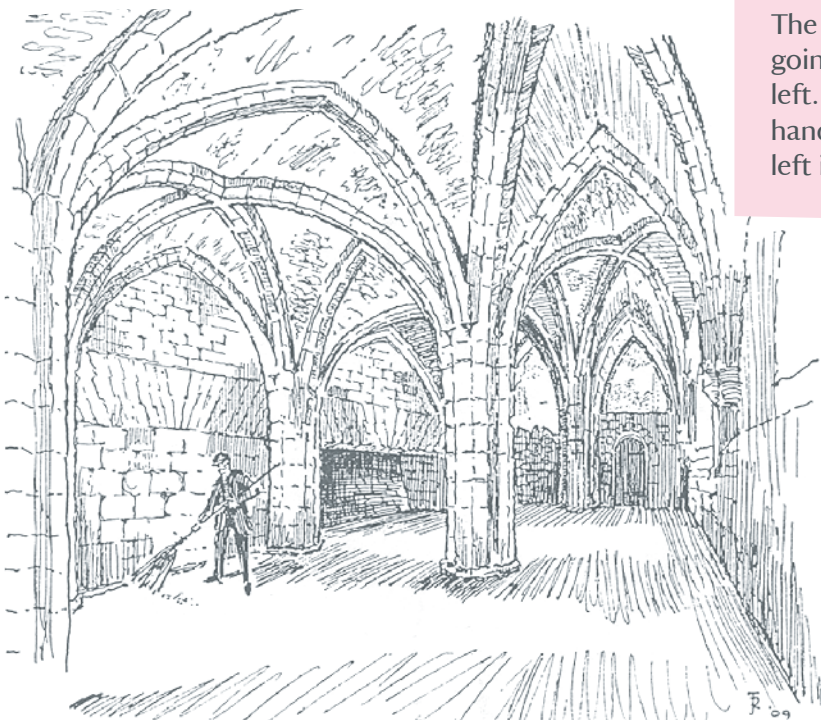
Activity – Shaving

If using the prop bag, hold up and then pass round the oyster shell, asking children what they thought it was for. This was for shaving their heads into the tonsure (the ring of hair around a bald patch said to signify the Crown of Thorns). They may also have used their knives, as every monk carried one.

Also in this room they carried out bloodletting which was thought to be good for you. They did this four times a year as well, but realised it weakened the monks so they were allowed to rest up in the Infirmary and get some extra food for a few days.

Move outside again and go to the left, stop here and mention the Lavatorium on your left. This long trough-like structure was where the water from the springs (from which Fountains Abbey may have got its name) from across the river was pumped to. The monks would have washed each other's feet here, as well as others who were in the abbey at the time. This signified humility, and even the Abbot took part.

The monks also washed their hands before going into the refectory, the next room on the left. Perhaps ask one child to inspect everyone's hands before going into the refectory. Then go left into the Refectory.



Refectory

This room is where the choir monks came for their meals. They walked down the centre of the room (in silence) and took their places with their backs to the walls. The stone table legs are still visible today. Grace was said and then they were given permission to sit down. Ask how many times a day the children think the monks ate a meal? Just once in winter and twice in summer. Mention that the days were shorter in winter, and longer in summer.

Activity – Refectory

If using the prop bag, hand out the cards with food items on them and ask children to split into what they thought the monks ate and what they thought they didn't eat. Monks did not eat the meat of four legged animals, but sometimes had chicken or fish. It was mostly seasonal vegetables and bread. They also had fruit and nuts. It was a very frugal diet. Mention Tudor exploration and introduction of new foods. But only enough to keep body and soul together. While the monks were eating in silence another monk would be reading from the platform on the right, providing food for the soul. If time an accompanied child/adult could read a chapter or say a prayer from pulpit, (stairway on the right) whilst the rest are silent below.

As they had to remain silent throughout their meals, they used a sign language to ask for something. Hand out the cards to a few of the children and ask them to make the signs and the others should guess what they are asking for.

In later years though, rules were relaxed and they were allowed to eat meat in a special room called the Misericord.

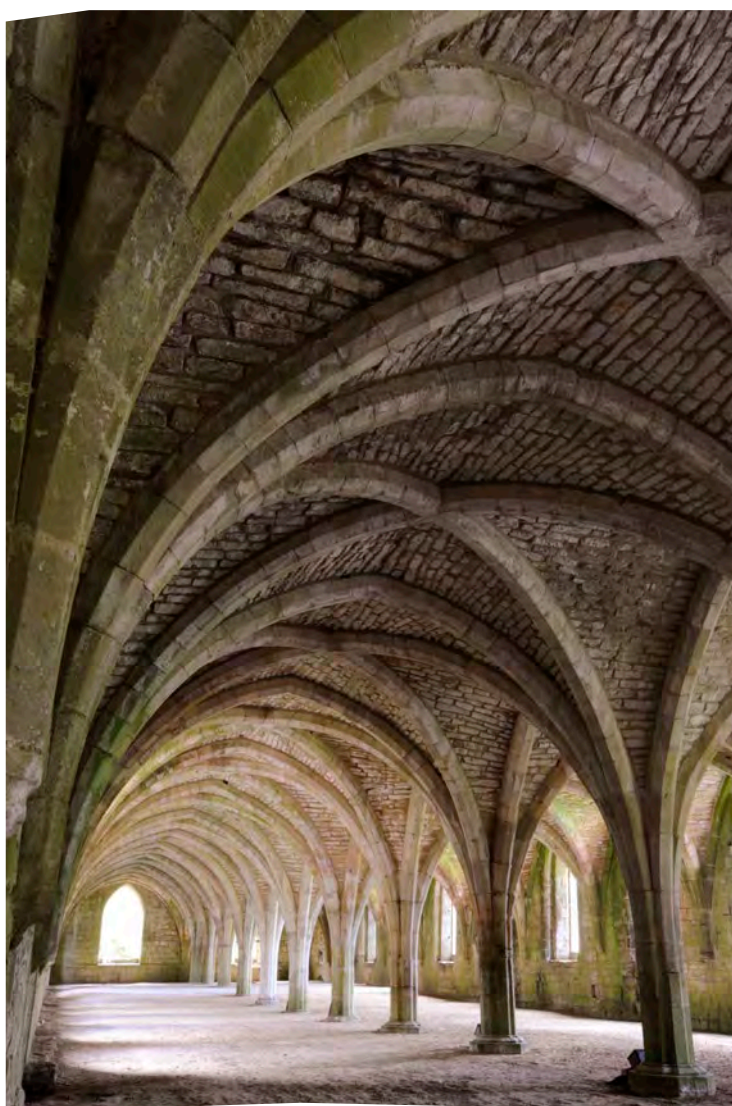
Explain that the kitchen next door provided meals for the choir monks and the lay brothers, who had their own refectory. Can they spot the doorway which had a turntable, rather than a door, to serve the meals?

Leave the Refectory, turning left and go into the Cellarium.



Cellarium

Explain that this room had two purposes, to the left as the lay brothers' Refectory and to the right as a store for all the wool from the sheep kept on the monks' farms.



Activity – Wool Trade

If using the prop bag, show the children the wool and the gold coins and ask what the connection is. Fountains Abbey grew rich through the wool trade. By 1300 the Abbey had 15,000 sheep on farms (granges) throughout the north of England. Merchants from Italy visited Fountains Abbey to inspect the wool and agree contracts of sale for the wool. It even had its own ship to export wool to other countries in Europe.

Sheep were very scraggy and were not eaten by the monks, even when the rules relaxed to be able to eat red meat. So what uses did keeping sheep give the monks? Of course there was the most important product – the wool itself. As the children handle the wool ask them how it feels. What else might a sheep provide? Then there was the skin, which when processed, became vellum for writing on. Lanolin, the silky feeling of the wool was used for soap, milk to drink and make cheese, tallow (fat) to make candles. Bones were used to make needles, horns were used for mugs or as handles on knives, and of course, manure for fertilizer. So the sheep were very valuable.

If you haven't yet done the Dissolution activity it could be done here. If not tell the children the end of the Fountains Abbey story below.

Henry VIII was taking power from the church and returning the land to the Crown, which meant the abbeys were closed and made unusable. Then sold off to meet the costs of his army and navy. The lead from the windows and the roof was melted down, valuables such as silver and gold plate and vestments were sold off. The Abbey was left unusable but was not completely demolished. The Abbot and the monks were pensioned off and left the Abbey.

At some point from here pose the question to the children of would they like to have been a monk? Ask for reasons why. What would have been the best bit and what would have been the worst?

A day in the life of a monk quiz

11

- 1 Who lived at Fountains Abbey?
 - 2 What colour were their robes?
 - 3 Why was this valley a good place to build an Abbey?
 - 4 Who could become a monk?
 - 5 How many church services a day did the monks attend?
 - 6 Why was it important for them to confess their sins?
 - 7 What did they use a quill and vellum for?
 - 8 Why did the monks have to copy documents?
 - 9 What was the rectangular recess in the Cloister wall for?
 - 10 What did they do in the Warming Room?
 - 11 What did they use the oyster shell for?
 - 12 For how long could a monk warm himself in front of the fire in the Warming Room?
 - 13 How many times a year did they have a bath?
 - 14 What is the name of the room that the monks had their meals?
 - 15 How many times a day did they have their meals?
 - 16 What did the monks eat?
 - 17 What didn't they eat?
 - 18 What made Fountains Abbey rich?
 - 19 What other uses did a sheep have?
 - 20 Which king closed the Abbey?
-

Church services

Services – down from dormitory at 2am for first service – night office Vigils/Matins

St. Benedict's rules taken from the psalms – “7 times daily have I praised you” and “At midnight I got up to give you praise.”

In one week all 150 psalms are covered. During one year's training as a novice, you learn all the services and psalms in Latin off by heart.

To leave church, face east high altar, low bow and repeat *nunc dimittes* after abbot: ‘Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.’ Low bow then depart in procession.

The Horarium (timetable)

2am Vigils (Matins): meditation

Lauds: just before daybreak

6am Prime at daybreak, followed by Chapter meeting & work. Mass in summer, before Tierce

9am Tierce, followed by work

Noon Sext, followed by dinner: one pound of bread, two dishes of vegetables, fish, and eggs cooked without grease. Beer to drink.

3pm Nones (in winter, the meal was taken after this)

6pm Vespers (sunset) Supper of bread, fruit, veg.

Collation, (evening reading) usually in Chapter House

8pm Compline just before bedtime – 6.30pm in winter, 8pm in summer

Move into Chapel of Nine Altars – explain why added i.e. abbey became very successful, money spent on improvements to the building, many monks became priests so could perform ceremony of Eucharist (consecrating [making sacred] & consuming bread & wine) for private patrons. Can also point out angel & bust of Abbot Darnton.



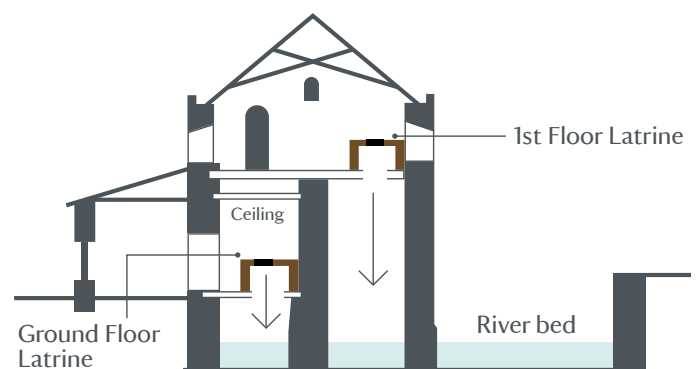
Infirmary

Monks used many herbal medicines and lay people came to the monastery for treatment.

Life expectancy of monks was longer than for lay population.

Old monks were sent to the infirmary, allowed to eat meat and there was also a fireplace. All monks to infirmary after bloodletting for a few days.

Lay Brothers' Reredorter (toilets)



(Rere = behind, dorter = dormitory)

This building was two-storeyed, with separate drains.

The drawing above shows how it was arranged.

Occasionally the monks would find urinal pots in the cubicles which they would be expected to use (one on display in Porter's Lodge).

The contents were then used in the fulling of wool.

Solid waste sank to the bottom of the river and when the river level was low it is likely that the river bed would have had to be cleared. This would then have been used as manure on the fields.

Both solid waste and urine were also used in the tanning of leather.

Exploring safely

We want everyone to have a safe and happy day out so please keep children under close supervision. The abbey is a historical building so please don't climb on it – use our wooden playground instead.

There are some gentle and steep slopes around the estate – some of the most challenging gradients are marked on the map. Please be aware of deep running water, uneven ground and height drops on the estate. We recommend wearing sturdy shoes when you visit.



Welcome

- A** Main car park
- B** Visitor centre entrance
- C** Bird hide
- D** Play area

Abbey

- E** Swanley Grange
- F** Porter's lodge and tours meeting point
- G** Fountains mill
- H** De Grey's Walk
- I** Fountains Hall
- J** Tea garden and orchard
- K** West Gate entrance and car park

Water garden

- L** Rustic bridge
- M** Surprise View and Anne Boleyn's Seat
- N** High Ride path
- O** Temple of Fame
- P** Octagon tower and Serpentine tunnel
- Q** Temple of Piety and Moon pond
- R** Fishing tabernacles and cascade
- S** Banqueting House
- T** Studley Royal entrance and car park

Deer park

- U** Seven bridges valley
- V** Ice houses
- W** Rough bridge
- X** Site of lost 'Studley Hall'
- Y** St Mary's Church
- Z** Choristers' House (holiday cottage)

Key

- Pay for entry area
- wc** Toilets, disabled toilets and baby change
- Picnic area
- Ball games area
- No ball games
- Food and drink
- No dogs allowed
- Shop
- Dog waste bins
- Steep slopes
- Visitor transport pick-up point (please request at admissions)
- P** Parking
- P2** Disabled parking
- Tours meeting point
- Hazard (steep drop)

Distances

Visitor Centre to Abbey
½ mile, 15 minutes walk

Abbey to Studley lake
1 mile, approximately 30 minutes walk

Studley lake to Visitor Centre via Deer Park
1 mile, approximately 30 minutes walk

Parking

Visitor Centre
Free

Studley Royal
Please use pay and display parking machines (NT members free)

West Gate
Free, priority for disabled visitors

Car parks close at 6.30pm (5.30pm in winter)

▼ B6265 to Ripon, Harrogate and A1(M)

B6265 to Brimham Rocks ▲